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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BRATISLAVA 000360

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [YI](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA WANTS TO TAKE IT SLOWER IN KOSOVO

REF: A. STATE 59894
[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 310

Classified By: Ambassador Rodolphe M. Vallee for Reason 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo was frank in discussions with the Slovak MFA on Kosovo that the impasse must come to an end soon and that independence is the only real option for Kosovo. MFA Director for CIS and the Balkans Stefan Rozkopal told her Slovakia agrees in general, but believes Ahtisaari and the contact group want to move forward too quickly; in Slovakia's view the process is as important as the final status. DAS DiCarlo's visit revealed gaps in GOS information about behind-the-scenes talks being held by the contact group and Ahtisaari, and were a useful step in starting to bring the Slovaks closer to the U.S. point of view. Discussions with MFA PolDir and Balkans expert Miroslav Lajcak May 2-4 provided the crucial next step. End summary.

PROCESS VS. STATUS

[1](#)2. (C) On April 27, EUR DAS Rosemary DiCarlo met with MFA Director for CIS and the Balkans Stefan Rozkopal (in the absence of PolDir Miroslav Lajcak), Kosovo Desk Officer Michal Pavuk, and representatives from the EU-Common Foreign and Security Policy Department to exchange views on Kosovo status talks and other developments in the Western Balkans. The discussion followed on the heels of UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's April 21 meeting with Foreign Minister Eduard Kukan in Bratislava, and the briefing on U.S. Kosovo policy that the DCM gave to Rozkopal April 18 (refs A and B).

[1](#)3. (C) DiCarlo urged Slovakia as an EU member to help engage the Serbs, giving tangible signs and incentives that an EU perspective is real. It is not in the EU's interests for the Western Balkans to remain a pocket of instability on the continent. Rozkopal responded that Slovakia is urging the Serbian government to be part of the process, but that the EU was not yet convinced it should offer Serbia an EU perspective, saying some "old countries" were not helpful. DiCarlo also said we would look to Slovakia as a UNSC member to support resolutions on the final status, and Rozkopal said Slovakia would do so.

[1](#)4. (C) DiCarlo pointed out that the U.S. does not see an option for Kosovo other than independence; it would be impossible to return to Belgrade's rule. We are not going public yet with this view; we need to give Belgrade time to adjust. We also need to find a way to put leverage on Kosovo Albanians; they must be more flexible, and they will have tremendous responsibility to implement future agreements. An independent Kosovo must be multi-ethnic, with a viable role

for Kosovo Serbs. We have seen some breakthroughs in Kosovo, but in response Belgrade seems to be retrenching and pulling back. We don't want to repeat the mistakes made in Bosnia by creating a "Serb" entity. France, Germany, and the UK share our views; but we are not hearing from Belgrade what they need.

15. (C) Rozkopal agreed that some kind of conditional independence is inevitable. However, Slovakia's priority is the process, rather than simply reaching final status. As in the "Velvet Divorce" between Slovakia and the Czech Republic, most issues should be settled in advance to avoid conflict in the future. Rozkopal agreed that it was difficult to understand what Belgrade wants, since they don't express their views, even to sympathetic parties like Slovakia that are willing to help them. He suggested there were two issues affecting Belgrade's will to prepare an exit strategy: what kind of borders will exist between Kosovo and Serbia (Rozkopal seemed to frame this as a question of administration rather than changing borders) and membership for Kosovo in the United Nations. Rozkopal agreed with the desire for a multi-ethnic Kosovo, but also expressed doubts. Kosovo Albanian leaders may be saying the right things, but the situation on the ground is different. He said there must be a way for Serbia to save face so that "psychological issues" like a desire for vengeance don't surface in the future.

16. (C) DiCarlo explained that the members of the contact group had been pushing hard for a bottom-up approach, resolving core issues related to a settlement before status. However, there must be buy-in from both sides, and the Serbs were not helping. She said the international community believes it can protect Kosovo Serbs. Rozkopal speculated

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that Serbs would not remain in Kosovo after independence. DiCarlo said it depended on what signal Belgrade sends; Kosovo Serbs do not want to leave their land. In addition, Kosovo cannot become independent without meeting certain, strong conditions. An international presence with executive powers will be crucial. There is a need for special agreements on churches, decentralization, and preserving links between Serb communities and Belgrade.

17. (C) Rozkopal expressed particular concern that there was not enough time to accomplish all of this. He could not imagine resolving all these issues by the fall, as proposed by Ahtisaari. DiCarlo explained that "in the course of 2006" was a target, not a deadline, and suggested that if we could get Serbia engaged, they could make it by the end of the year. She said that the Serbs are very clever and certainly know what they want. They simply won't tell us, and keep putting off meetings. Delaying final status for too long leads to pent-up frustrations and could possibly result in violence. In response, DiCarlo credited the Belgrade government for handling Milosevic's death wisely, and said work must still be done to convince the public it was Milosevic who lost Kosovo. In this respect, Rozkopal said, Slovak NGOs (perhaps with American funding) could be very helpful, since they already had good programs with local NGOs, universities, and youth.

ECONOMIC STAGNATION -----

18. (C) Rozkopal suggested the poor state of the economy was another reason to proceed cautiously, since Kosovo is dependent on foreign aid. DiCarlo explained that we do not want Kosovo to become a failed state, taken over by organized crime and a haven for terrorists. Sovereignty is needed to be eligible for IFI lending; private investment will not increase until status is resolved. This instability is bad for Europe and the U.S., and make final status decisions ever the more urgent. There was a broader discussion of economic issues over lunch, which was attended by Rozkopal, Pavuk, and

representatives of two Slovak NGOs. The NGO voices were closer to the U.S. position, and argued that only Kosovo's independence in the near term would help the economy and prevent further conflict.

MONTENEGRO, BOSNIA-HERCEGOVINA

¶9. (C) Rozkopal told DiCarlo that Slovakia stands firmly behind the 55 percent threshold for validity in the Montenegro referendum on independence. He also said that Slovak facilitator Lajcak had been urging the sides to consider what the State Union would look like if the referendum fails, and how to resolve all the issues that will arise if it succeeds. Based on the "Velvet Divorce" experience, Slovakia could be helpful in facilitating communication.

¶10. (C) Both DiCarlo and Rozkopal expressed regret at the failure of constitutional reform in Bosnia-Herzegovina, though DiCarlo noted that at least people had started thinking about reforms to modernize the Dayton structure. Rozkopal said that something should be done in Bosnia with the Croats.

MEDIA INTERVIEWS HIGHLIGHT PROBLEMS, PROGRESS

¶11. (C) DiCarlo gave interviews to Slovak Radio and to leading print daily "Sme." The young journalists were keen, well-prepared, and asked detailed questions on events in the Balkans and the U.S. point of view. DiCarlo was quoted in an April 29 Sme article on the constitutional reform vote in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

COMMENT: GOS APPRECIATIVE, CAN BE MOVED

¶12. (C) Slovak interlocutors were very appreciative of DiCarlo's visit and openness. As Rozkopal explained, Slovakia has a sincere interest in the Balkans because of cultural and geographical proximity. However, because Slovakia is not a member of the contact group, and does not have a representative on Ahtisaari's team, it is difficult to stay informed about all the behind-the-scenes discussions. Therefore, DiCarlo's visit was extremely valuable in starting to bring the Slovaks closer in line with our vision. Discussions with PolDir Miroslav Lajcak, who is the Slovak MFA's real Balkans expert, the week of May 2 will be an instrumental next step.

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¶13. (U) DAS Rosemary DiCarlo cleared this cable.
VALLEE